DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 297 897 RC 016 620

TITLE	Redesigning Rural Education: Ideas for Action.
INSTITUTION	Mid-Continent Regional Educational Lab., Aurora, CO.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	[86]
CONTRACT	400-86-0002
NOTE	23p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Viewpoints (120)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Career Counseling; Community Development; *Educational Improvement; Elementary Secondary Education; Local Area Networks; *Program Descriptions; *Rural Education
IDENTIFIERS	Black Hills State College SD; Mid Continent Regional Educational Laboratory; Missouri; North Dakota; South Dakota

ABSTRACT

This brochure offers descriptions of three Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory (McREL) programs designed to improve elementary and secondary education in the midwestern United States. "Project ACCESS" helps students explore career options. "Decisions About Technology" helps increase learning opportunities through the use of computer technology. "Rural School and Community Development" helps students and community interact to improve the economic health of the community. Clustering schools is a way of dealing with declining money and resources. Sharing teachers, students and equipment can be positive alternatives to reductions in staff, student enrollment, and equipment. Linkages through computer or video networks among schools successfully reach local colleges, employers, and community organizations. Capsule descriptions of 28 working rural programs, including rural school organizations, community study projects, and technology programs, are provided; the name and address of a contact person is included for each program. A list of related McREL publications concludes the document. (TES)

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REDESIGNING RURAL EDUCATION

IDEAS FOR ACTION

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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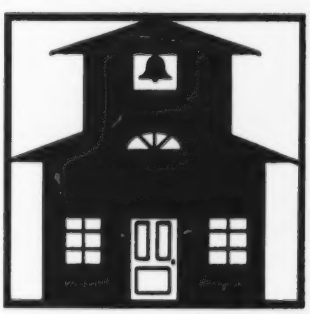

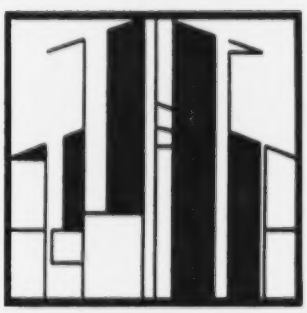

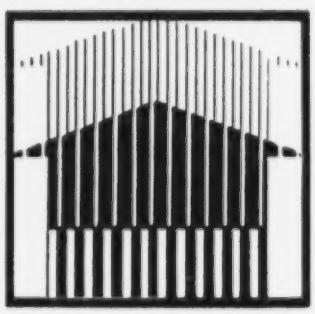

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MID-CONTINENT REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL LABORATORY
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Dear Colleague:

As America moves from an industrial age to an information age, her schools have a singular responsibility to prepare students for their new lives. Successful, productive adulthood in the information age requires people who are critical thinkers and problem solvers, who can select and use sophisticated information, and who are effective and intelligent users of technology. The design of the school system we have been using for the past hundred years cannot meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

School improvement and reform efforts are not sufficient, especially for rural schools. Many of the current reform proposals solve problems that rural and small schools don't have: Teachers are generally good, time on task is high in small schools and discipline, vandalism and drop-outs are not the serious problems they are elsewhere. We don't need to fix things that aren't broken.

The current pattern of schooling, a product of the industrial age that never fit rural small schools well, not only needs to be fixed, it needs to be redesigned. Industrial, urban areas needed schools that could indoctrinate large numbers of immigrants, turning them into productive factory workers who took orders and were no threat to the social order. The information age requires independent thinkers and people who can work together in groups, defining and gathering the information they need to solve problems. Redesigned schools must use new techniques of instruction, built on recent research on cognition and learning. They must take advantage of technology to deliver instruction, and invent new organizational forms to support new ways of teaching and learning.

Rural schools are positioned to be leaders in schools redesign. School can be redesigned in ways that take advantage of the real strengths of rural and small communities. This brochure presents some exciting ideas, notions and projects that capitalize on good educational practice, small size and closely knit communities. It is an exciting time for people interested in rural education, and McREL is pleased to be a part of increasing the capacity of rural, small schools to develop their own brave new futures. This brochure invites you to be a part of it as well.

Sincerely,

C. L. Hutchins

C. L. Hutchins
Executive Director

This publication is funded, in part, by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Department of Education, under Contract Number 400-86-0002. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views of OERI, the Department or any other agency of the U.S. Government.

Growing Rural Capacity for Education Improvement

Small rural schools used to be considered one of America's strengths. Leaders in business, medicine, law and social policy have been educated in small schools. As recently as twenty years ago, colleges and employers prized students from rural America because they were well prepared and worked hard.

Recent opinion mistakenly judges rural education a poor substitute for urban education. **McREL believes rural schools have important and unique services to offer.** The lab has been working for eight years on issues in rural education and has crafted strategies to help rural and small schools and their communities develop a capacity for renewal. But education must be redesigned by people who have the largest stake in its support. Our goal is to help them build that capacity.

Rural education has many strengths

Careful reading of the reports of reformers and recommendations from the effective schools research reflects an ideal system that looks a great deal like the best rural schools:

- There is broad consensus in rural areas that education is important.
- Students are educated in small groups, opportunities exist for cross-age tutoring and team learning.
- Student/teacher ratios are low and students receive individualized attention.
- Teachers know students well. Discipline and vandalism, often signs of alienation, are not problems. Communication is personal, direct and rapid.
- The entire organization operates on a human scale. Community members agree on goals. They are proud of the school and the success of its students.

Rural education also has weaknesses

Rural does not only mean agriculture. Rural economies include mining, harvesting natural resources, fishing, recreation and tourism as well as farming. What rural areas have in common is small numbers of people separated by large distances. These circumstances can lead to some weaknesses in rural education.

- Small schools can only offer a limited range of traditional courses.
- Teachers are often the only subject expert in the school. They often have five or more preparations for different courses each day. There is little free time for planning or collegial exchange.
- Teacher training is geared to a mass market dominated by suburban and urban schools, so teachers in rural schools must often learn on-the-job.
- Opportunities for advanced training, research and professional exchange are limited by budgets and distances.
- Many rural areas are suffering economic decline and shrinking tax revenues.

- Teachers, students and the community suffer from the notion that rural is "second best" and the goal of the school is to train people to leave because of the belief that success is found only in the big city.

McREL's philosophy of rural education

Students should not be penalized because of where their parents chose to live. The goal of education is to prepare students for productive, rewarding lives wherever they decide to live. **Our contribution to making this possible is to create a capacity within rural communities and schools for improvement**. Our research suggests clustering is one such strategy.

Clustering is a strategy for building capacity for development. Clustering builds local school and community capacity to control the future. Clustering attempts to limit the effects of size, low density population and isolation and connect rural schools with existing information and policy infrastructures. Clusters have been successful throughout McREL's region:

- In North Dakota, four clusters involving 26 schools are working together on applications of technology to increase course offerings. An earlier cluster successfully shared staff development activities.
- In South Dakota, eight pilot communities are reviewing the mission of their schools and integrating notions of community economic development in the curriculum.
- In Missouri, several small schools, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the University collaborated on using micro-computers to expand and enrich the instructional program.
- In Colorado, five rural small schools formed a cluster to improve science instruction, and three clusters of schools are developing strategic plans for school/community renewal.
- In Kansas, eight districts and the Center for Rural and Small Schools at K-State provide for professional development and technical assistance for the school staff.
- In Nebraska, four schools mounted a cooperative curriculum development effort with support from the State Department of Education and Kearney State College.

Creating a cluster is relatively simple. The first step is to identify a core group of schools roughly the same size and within driving distance of one another. The size issue is important because the cluster members should have a shared sense of control, no one school dominating. Rural communities are, with good historical reason, very sensitive to threats of consolidation under any guise, which is why it is important not to have one large district and several smaller ones. Easy driving distance is important to facilitate face-to-face meetings and the personal interaction is crucial to communication in the rural tradition.

The second step is to **identify additional sources of help**, such as a state department of education (SEA) and/or an institution of higher education (IHE). SEA participation is important because the SEA can issue variances to the rules and regulations that don't fit rural realities. The institution of higher education can provide technical assistance. In both cases, it is vital that the representatives commit to work

with the schools over time and are willing to work on the agenda that the cluster develops, not that of the SEA or IHE.

Third, **the cluster meets to establish their agenda**. The outside parties must agree that the agenda belongs to the cluster. As a common problem is identified and solved through collaborative action, working together proves to be a strategy that can do more than any single district can do alone, without threat to local control. A successful project generates the capacity to tackle increasingly more difficult problems.

The role McREL plays in the cluster is to facilitate a role that could be played by any outside agency. It involves calling the first meetings, providing small amounts of travel money for early participants, searching out other resources and bringing them to the attention of the group, helping clarify common problems and suggesting a range of possible solutions.

McREL rural initiative projects

What follows are descriptions of three projects designed by McREL with the rural initiative funds appropriated by Congress in 1986. Each is undergirded by the cluster strategy in some form. Each builds on the strengths of rural communities and schools and each addresses a significant problem common to rural education.

Rural education is abuzz with innovative practices, of which the McREL projects form one small subset. Innovative ideas for action and a small sample of promising practices for improving rural education follow these three descriptions.

Project ACCESS

Fred is a junior in Murdock High. A bright kid, he is a good athlete and more interested in the basketball team winning the District Tournament than in his grades. Until now, going on to college was not something Fred thought much about. However, things have not gone well the last few years on the family farm. Recent supper conversations drifted to how much longer they could hang on and the need for Fred to think about what else he might do after graduation.

The guidance counselor stopped him in the hall recently, excited about information provided by Project ACCESS on a new program at Valley State. She indicated that a special seminar was being held in the neighboring town where an Olympic athlete was going to talk about her experience. The chance to hear a real live Olympian convinced him to join other students on Saturday.

The day turned out to be a lot of talk about life after high school and how, if you really make up your mind, you can do anything you set out to do. Fred got to know kids from other schools who were going to Valley and decided that might not be a bad thing to do. Perhaps, he did need to get those grade up just a bit, but now he knew that he could!

Project ACCESS targets small schools (400 of fewer, K-12) in rural areas of the country where, because of the economic decline in agriculture, mining, energy, and timber, etc., traditional career choices are no longer available. **Students need additional assistance in exploring alternative career options** along with continuing support pursuing those options.

Project ACCESS builds on existing guidance/career counseling programs, providing resources to both improve and expand current efforts. Community forums are designed to provide a better understanding of local social and economic trends and the implications for career planning. **Guidance counsellors, school administrators and community leaders/mentors are networked and provided access to information not typically available in rural schools.** Students are involved in motivational activities designed to raise their level of aspirations.

Objectives

Assist students, educators and community leaders to better understand the environmental changes that are taking place in their region and the effects of these changes on their lives and careers.

Strengthen the counseling programs in rural schools so that they are better equipped to provide information about post-secondary options.

Provide career planning assistance to students through activities which will A) raise expectations and increase motivation; B) increase the career and planning information which students can access; C) assist with preparation for college entrance tests;

D) assist with college choice and increase the likelihood the student will stay in school until graduation; and E) initiate activities designed to ease the transition to, and success in, college.

Provide a support structure of community leaders for students attending area institutions of higher education to help insure successful completion of a college program and maintain linkages to keep open the possibility of returning to the local community.

Activities

Planning meetings are held with participating schools to determine how Project ACCESS might be most useful to them and to the region.

Training and information sessions are provided for guidance counsellors and other school leaders.

Social and economic trends are examined in training sessions for community leaders, providing them with the skills and information to conduct local community forums on the environmental changes taking place and the implications for career choices.

A cadre of community leaders are trained to serve as mentors for students participating in the programs.

Motivational seminars are held for students.

Current status

Program is operational in Northwest Missouri. Legislation is pending to provide funds for implementation in other parts of the country.

Decisions About Technology

The rural schools of McLean County were typically competitors on the athletic field. Today, they had a different agenda. All of the schools were feeling the budget squeeze and trying to find ways to maintain quality programs with fewer dollars. The state had just provided incentive money for pilot technology programs. A planning meeting, facilitated by McREL, was called to see if there were a way to develop a cooperative program that could benefit all. They wanted to share specialized teachers for advanced course offerings and other specialized resources. Because of tight dollars, the technology had to be relatively inexpensive.

McREL knew of a project that used a computer network, that served as an electronic blackboard, and audio conferencing to create an interactive instructional system. Computers were either available or relatively affordable as were conference telephones, modems and telephone line charges. With state funds, the "tele-learning" system is being assembled, the planning and in-service are underway to get the program operable for the coming school year. Master teachers from any of the 6 cooperating districts will then be shared by all, offering foreign languages, advanced math and other specialized subjects not previously available.

Rural school districts generally are experiencing tighter budgets while at the same time, because of school reform measures, they are being asked to strengthen and add courses to the curriculum. In short, districts are being asked to do more-with-less. **Technology (distant learning) offers learning opportunities not otherwise available.**

Successful implementation of instructional technology requires careful planning at both the state and local level. What needs to be offered, to whom, and how, are questions that must be answered by districts. How are distant learning courses approved, who provides classroom supervision and who is qualified to teach courses which may originate outside the state: these are issues that the state education agency (SEA) must address. Implementation of technology is easier and more effective if done in collaboration with others, e.g. working in a cluster with neighboring schools, higher education, etc. Decisions About Technology provides assistance in addressing these issues.

Objectives

Assist in the development of a state level technology plan to provide guidance and coherence to district technology implementation state-wide.

Assist districts and the SEA in the necessary planning required to effectively integrate technology into existing instructional programs.

Facilitate the formation of clusters of schools to collaborate in the implementation of a common technology.

Provide information necessary for educators to understand useful technology applications for particular school settings.

Provides access to information to insure that small rural schools are purchasing quality equipment at the best price.

Provide staff development for the effective implementation of the systems selected.

Activities

Facilitate meetings with a SEA technology committee.

Assist in the writing of a state technology plan.

Facilitate and provide planning assistance for the creation of technology clusters. (Effective use of technology often requires the working together of a number of neighboring schools.)

Serve as a liaison between technology clusters and the SEA.

Provide consultant assistance on technical problems related to specific technologies.

Provide consultants for in-service on specific technologies, e.g. satellite instruction, computer networks, interactive video systems.

Plan and facilitate a state-wide conference to support and expand the use of instructional technology.

Current Status

Decisions About Technology currently serves the state of North Dakota.

The Rural School and Community Development

The principal of Rock Creek High, always looking for ways to make the school's program more meaningful for students, was contacted by the intermediate service agency about a special project designed to get the school more involved in the development of the community. By making the community the focus of study, students would better understand the local economy, identifying entrepreneurial opportunities which, given the proper skills and assistance, students could pursue. Developing these employment niches would allow students to remain in the community rather than seek employment in the city, if they chose to do so.

Excited both about how this project could provide some good practical learning experiences for students and contribute to the economic health of the community, the principal went to the superintendent and board for permission to participate. New classes were added and students who teachers identified as "risk takers" were encouraged to enroll. A "research and development" class will focus on studying existing economic conditions in the community. Recognizing that a community that knows where it has been is best equipped to know where it is going, a class in historiography was formed to document the area's past. With a solid knowledge base from which to work, entrepreneurship will be added to the program and ways explored for the school to serve as an incubator for school based enterprises.

States in the upper-Midwest have been hard hit by the deterioration of the rural economy. Boarded up store fronts and declining population characterize rural communities as residents are forced to leave to find employment. **Unless these communities find ways to expand and strengthen their economic base and stem the out-migration, their future is at risk.**

The public school plays an important economic role in the local community. It is often the largest employer as well as the largest purchaser of goods and services. We have assumed that the impact of the schools is an economic plus. However, this is not the whole story. While local tax dollars have been fed into the system, the most important resource, the community's young people have, for the most part, been educated to leave the community either to continue their education, or find employment in larger urban centers. By including in the educational program experiences that provide a better understanding of the career opportunities in the community and the skills needed to take advantage of those opportunities, schools will insure that students have the option to stay, if they choose. **Involving students in a study of the community, collecting and analyzing data, and making this information available to community planners, not only enriches the educational opportunities for students but places the school in a more central role of contributing to the economic health of the community.**

Objectives

Assist rural communities in the re-examination of the mission of the school to determine the desirability of expanding that mission to include community development.

Assist teachers in making the study of the community, including the collection, analysis, and reporting of economic and social trend data, an integral part of the curriculum.

Assist in the development of an entrepreneurial curriculum.

Work with school districts in the incubation of school based enterprises and procedures for spinning off those enterprises when they have properly matured.

Activities

Establish a local technical assistance capacity by identifying individuals and agencies working in rural development.

Identify, orient, and secure commitment from a cluster of interested schools.

Conduct workshops for teachers, administrators and community leaders of participating schools.

Create and convene a state resource committee to provide legitimacy and technical support for the program.

Current Status

The Rural School and Community Development Project involves the Black Hills Special Services Cooperative, Black Hills State College and eight pilot schools in the West River area of South Dakota.

Rural Alternatives List

Good ideas can be simple or complex. Here are some ideas that McREL has come across, being implemented in rural small schools much like yours. We've divided them into three level so you can select action alternatives that match your situation. Level one alternatives can be implemented by a single school district within the confines of the existing organizational structure. Level two alternatives are more complex, requiring the cooperation of two or more districts and/or changes in existing organizational patterns. Level three alternatives require major design changes in the mission, organization and operation of the school.

Ideas a single school can implement

Level I Alternatives

1. Correspondence courses, many of which have been markedly improved, for single students wishing specialized and advanced courses.
2. Multiple class teaching (teaching more than one subject to different students during the same class period.)
3. Micro-computers for instruction, simulations, data access...
4. Multi-age grouping for greater efficiencies, team learning, etc.
5. More effective use of existing staff. Elementary teachers often have skills/hobbies that are of interest to secondary students; secondary teachers have content specialities that can be a useful resource to elementary teachers.
6. Use of conference phones to bring in outside resource people.
7. Satellite instruction for full classes or curriculum enrichment.
8. Using the community as a resource
   - utilizing the school environment as a laboratory for teaching science, math, social studies, history, etc.
   - contracting with local businesses for career exploration and vocational training.
   - community volunteers to serve as experts for special content areas or as teacher aides.
9. Providing resources for the community
   - opening the school early so people can walk and exercise inside in the winter
   - sharing the kitchen facilities for food services for the community
   - operating a joint school/community library
   - using school buses as transportation for the elderly
10. Educational travel, cultural field trips.

Level II Alternatives

Ideas for two or more schools

1. Share instructional staff with neighboring schools.
2. Coordinating buying and sharing specialized instructional materials, (e.g., specialized science equipment, software, library books, sets and costumes for plays, etc.)
3. Share students for specialized courses, musical groups, athletics.
4. Alternative scheduling arrangements
   - block scheduling to eliminate study halls, reduce the number of daily preparations for teachers, reduce travel for teacher and student sharing.
   - four-day school week to reduce energy costs and provide time and money for instructional or school improvement purposes.
   - rotate schedule so all classes share equally in "prime teaching time" and the unavoidable interruptions of extra-curricular activities.
5. Traveling classrooms for subjects needing special facilities.
6. Fiber optics/microwave inter-active television for sharing courses.
7. Gifted student or special interest seminars involving neighboring schools.

Level III Alternatives

Ideas for major redesign

1. Redesigning the curriculum into broad integrated content areas around topics critical to the 21st Century, for example energy, ecology, technology and change, space, economics and entrepreneurialism, culture, community and social justice, international cooperation and competition, communications.
2. Rethinking the mission of the public schools to include rural economic development, and in communities where the school is the last viable public service agency, the delivery of health and welfare services.
3. Redefining the role of teachers and administrators consistent with the resturctured mission and curriculum, integrating technology in all aspects of the program as appropriate.
4. Create and educational infrastructures at the state and intermediate agency level which will facilitate and support quality rural schools.

Clearly, changes will be needed in policy and regulations for the redesign of schools to take place. This, however, is not an insurmountable roadblock. Most states have some provision for experimental programs. A number of state are not only exempting pilot schools from all existing regulations, but providing additional resources to explore more effective ways of achieving quality education.

Rural Programs That Work

Community as a Focus of Study

Title	Description:	For more information contact:
Informal Science Study (ISS)	ISS starts with a trip to a local field or swamp, athletic event or an afternoon on the playground. What kids experience during these outings is then discussed to provide concrete examples of abstract scientific principles such as: motion, acceleration, relativity, magnetic forces, gravity, conservation of energy and frames of reference. ISS also uses experiments with race cars, model rockets, etc.	Dr. Howard Jones, University of Houston, Room 348 Farish Hall; Houston, TX 77004. (713) 749-1624 and 749-3584.
New Mexico Rural Science Education Project	The RSEP brings teachers and field experts together to explore the local environment, collect specimens and identify local science-oriented installations (i.e., the U.S. Forest Service). A source book is compiled on the area that includes geologic descriptions, maps and illustrations. The source book and local survey allow teachers to develop science kits, carry out science and nature projects and develop curriculum using local resources.	Dr. Jeffrey Gottfried, New Mexico Museum of Natural History, P.O. Box 7010, Albuquerque, New Mexico 87194. (505) 841-8837.
Owen County Elementary School Writing Skills Program	The writing skills program is an ongoing Business/Community partnership to teach composition, layout and editing to fifth graders. The local newspaper has undertaken to publish a monthly newspaper page researched, written and illustrated entirely by students. Students also take the photographs and do the layout. Stories cover school experiences, creative writing and features on teachers and student activities.	Mike Ramsey, Principal, Owen County Elementary, Route #4, Box 61, Owenton, KY 40359. (502) 484-3417.
Heads Up	College-bound students in rural areas are often frustrated with the lack of advanced-level course work. The Heads Up Program delivers this kind of specialized course work to juniors and seniors preparing for college. Heads Up cooperates with neighboring districts and outside instructors to keep abreast of advanced course work for students with special abilities and interests.	Dr. Bill Nelson, Superintendent of Schools, Otis School District R-3, Otis, CO 80743. (303) 246-3413.

Title	Description:	For more information contact:
North Calloway Elementary Science, Health & Social Studies Project	Whether first graders are learning about dinosaurs, food, pet care or other subjects, the class textbook is now consulted only for reference. The primary teaching source is the community. Community resources are providing students with a wealth of information on available career opportunities, basic nutrition, arithmetic and other subjects. With multiple field trips and frequent guest speakers, students are learning, first hand, elementary science, health and social studies.	Anita Burkeen, North Calloway Elementary School, Route 2, Murray, KY 42071. (502) 753-9776.
Oral History Opinion Poll	Some 540 students in grades 10 through 12 are taking part in an original program that involves the entire community. Through student interviewing of local citizens, the program is teaching students modern opinion-polling practices. At the same time it instills an appreciation of the past and develops an interest in family and community history. The project is also developing a learning center to store information for future student research.	Lee Weber, South Sioux City School District, 3301 G. Street, South Sioux City, NE 68776. (402) 494-2433.
3 R's - Ropes, Rocks, Risks	Lacking self-esteem, students often turn to drugs, alcohol or engage in other self-destructive behavior. The 3 R's program was developed to provide students with a healthier outlook and alternative leisure activities. An adventure program builds self-esteem and creates new ideals through wilderness outings, rock climbing, hiking, relaying, risk, challenge activities and other group initiatives.	Betty Brown, St. Vrain Valley, Frederick High School, P.O. Box 380, Frederick, CO 80530. (303) 833-3533.
Wilson Lake Excursion	The Wilson Lake Excursion is a nature program for junior high school students. Students hike nature trails; learn about different plants and animals; build box kites from garbage bags; imagine themselves as different animals such as foxes, squirrels, birds and insects living in their natural environment. At night the students learn to recognize animal calls and star patterns.	Albert Schendel, Box 203, Wilson, KS 67490. (913) 658-3558.

Title	Description:	For more information contact:
Coupon Calculation	Math and community service come together in a novel program to increase students' math skills. Students visit senior citizens, compile shopping lists, and purchase groceries. Students use rebate coupons and calculate savings over regular store prices on a weekly basis. The program lasts three months. Not only does this program increase student math skills, but it gives students the opportunity to meet and help the elderly in a meaningful way.	Larry Breedlove, 3130 North 122nd Street, Kansas City, KS 66109. (913) 721-1243.
Multi-Sensory Social Studies	The goal of MSSS is to go beyond the normal classroom curriculum to provide first-grade students with a dynamic learning experience that takes advantage of the people and other resources in the community. Parent involvement in MSSS is high. During career participation day, doctors, lawyers, nurses and other professionals tell the children about their jobs. MSSS leads to high motivation and rapport between parents, community and children.	Suzanne Russell, RETRIEVAL #1, Box 93, Douglass, KS 67039.
Parishville-Hopkinton Outdoor Program	The outdoor education program at Parishville-Hopkinton High School gives students an in-depth look at wilderness living. Teachers take students on cross country ski trips into Adirondack Park. Part of the program includes making snowshoes, tree identification, canoeing, ice fishing, winter camping and outdoor survival skills. Costs are modest because class members donate snowshoes, etc. to the class.	Superintendent Gary J. Buehler, Parishville-Hopkinton Central School, Parishville, NY 13672. (315) 265-4642.
Hazen Union School Forestry Course	Students in grades 10 to 12 at the Hazen Union School can take the enormously popular Introduction to Forestry course. On 70 wooded acres students learn about trees, forest management, chainsaws and safety. Students help in the making of maple syrup, lumbering and Christmas tree management. Profits are used to improve the program.	Marc Luneau or Principal Glenn Yankee, Hazen Union School, Hardwick, VT 05843. (802) 472-6521

Rural School Organization Projects

Title	Description:	For more information contact:
Alternative Teacher Certification	When rural teachers fail to develop ties they often leave the community. This is serious because rural communities also have difficulties attracting qualified applicants. To deal with this situation, the Alternative Teacher Certification Program is designed to find and train local residents with BA and BS Degrees and prepare them to become teachers. Then, as school positions become available through retirement or attrition, the district can tap this reservoir of talent and maintain quality education.	Sally Brinkema, Northeast Colorado Board of Cooperative Services, P.O. Box 98, Haxtun, CO 80731. (303) 774-6152.
CAP: Career Awareness Program	CAP emphasizes the relation between career choices and academic skills. Designed for K-9 pupils, the program uses learning packets to introduce 30 different occupations at each grade level. Learning packets give detailed descriptions of occupations and include information on job responsibilities, tools used, training and education required and the personality type best suited for the kind of work. Students get a chance to role play and exercise problem-solving skills.	Jeanne Leffler, Director, or Dorthea King, Assistant Director, Box 13, Greenland, AR 72737. (501) 443-3336.
Gifted And Talented Program	Parents, students, teachers and administrators in one rural area have banded together to create the best possible learning environment for students with outstanding potential. The gifted and talented program is a unique combination of after-school enrichment activities, advanced computer use and specialized teaching strategies. The program offers higher levels of critical thinking, training in research and communications skills and projects designed to expand the imagination and creativity.	Margo Miller, Coordinator, RE-6J, 2600 Rose Ave., Burlington, CO 80807. (303) 346-8166.
STEP: School Transition To Employment Partnership	STEP is a program to provide on-the-job pre-employment training for handicapped, dropout, economically disadvantaged and other "at risk" students. Local employers create the jobs, supervise performance and pay salaries. A high percentage of at-risk students achieve economic and social self-sufficiency through the STEP program.	Terry Hendrick, 700 Governors Drive, Pierre, SD 57501. (605) 773-3423.

Title	Description:	For more information contact:
North Rose Wolcott P.A.S.S.	PASS (Portable Assisted Study Sequence) keeps migrant students from dropping out of school. Most children of migrant workers on the East Coast attend schools for a few months in New York and then in September return to Florida and Texas. The PASS program now offers a system that allows their school records to follow them. Students can accumulate and transfer credits more easily. Dropout rates have dramatically declined.	Basil Dobush, Program Coordinator, North Rose-Wolcott Central School, Wolcott, NY 14590. (315) 587-2352.
Shared Resources	Sheridan College and three high schools in four school districts in Wyoming have joined together to share some of their resources. Included are facilities, in-service training for faculty and faculty assignments, and student activities. A special summer school program for all four high schools will be held at the Sheridan community college this year.	Dr. Lynn Burnham, Sheridan College, P. O. Box 1500, Sheridan, WY 82801. (307) 674-6446.
Lebanon, N.H. Career Guidance	A career guidance program in Lebanon, New Hampshire went through several revisions. Kids let planners know they wanted the "real thing." Now on career day students meet with "real" interviewers from local business and industry. Colleges send interviewers and kids fill out resumes using actual tests results. Student interest has soared and better contacts have come about with employers and colleges.	Dan Swainbank, Lebanon High School, Lebanon, NH 03766. (603) 448-2135.
Parents As Teachers	Parents as Teachers is a home/school partnership. PAT shows parents how to teach and promote skills at home that lead to later success in school. Parents learn to observe and encourage early development. PAT increases parental confidence and lays the foundation for a working relationship between home and school. PAT children show advanced intellectual and language development.	Parents as Teachers: The National Center, Marillac Hall; University of Missouri at St. Louis, 8001 Natural Bridge Road, St. Louis, MO 63121. (314) 553-5738.

A Picture Is Worth A Thousand Words	Using this program, parents of handicapped children can continue preschool training at home. Replacing written directions, this program uses VHS tapes to demonstrate the most effective instructional techniques or therapies. VHS tapes can be custom made to deal specifically with the needs of each individual child. Tapes are easy to produce, reusable and have been well received by parents.	Joyce Wentworth, Director of Student Services, 1900 Ferdig, Yankton, SD 57078. (605) 665-3999.
Prep: Peers Responsibly Educating Peers	The PREP program confronts the spreading of alcohol and drug abuse among junior and senior high students. PREP uses video tapes, role playing, discussion, films and true stories to get across the message that alcohol and drugs kill. Begun as a memorial to three local students, PREP is modeled on other programs that rely on peers to communicate the dangers of substance abuse.	Gary Lubell, Strasburg Jr./Sr. High, P.O. Box 207, Strasburg, CO 80136. (303) 622-9211.
Read Aloud Program	Fourth grade students in the Read Aloud Program work together to create storybooks that they read to individual first-grade students. Fourth graders take great pride in their writing skills and in completing their own books. They also learn to work in groups. First graders get to hear new stories from other children. Through RAP, reading is encouraged, writing skills are promoted, students learn the love of reading and develop self-esteem.	Kirk McLaughlin, P.O. Box 258, Bayfield, CO 81122. (303) 834-9592.
Student Team Learning	Student Team Learning (STL) mixes up students to form heterogeneous groups in terms of sex, race and past performance. It is particularly useful in multi-grade classes. Teams play academic games, become experts in subject areas and teach topics to teammates. Team learning has been successful for language arts, math and especially for the acquisition of social skills. It can be used as a regular part of classroom instruction in any subject.	Barbara A. Bennett, Dissemination Coordinator, Center for Social Organization of Schools, 3505 N. Charles St., Baltimore, MD 21218. (301) 338-8249.

Technology Programs

Title	Description:	For more information contact:
Dansville, NY Junior High School Goes Online	When keyboarding and word processing skills were not enough to provide students with reference and research skills, the Dansville project was born. Going beyond basic computer skills, eighth graders are trained in an aggressive blending of retrieval skills and computer communications techniques. Students learn a general telecommunications vocabulary, refine search strategies and go online with real computers. The program has shown the exciting possibilities of telecommunications for even small schools.	Principal Robert Hilliard or Librarian Betty Minemier, Dansville Junior High School, Dansville, NY 14437. (716) 335-3186.
Fifth Grade Communications Class	The fifth grade class is getting hands-on experience in communications. For an eight-week period each year, an expert is brought in to help students set up a working TV station complete with station manager, news director, program director, actors, advertising department, etc. Student reporters cover local events and student camera crews tape entire TV shows, including news, commercials and programming. Students learn the importance of communication skills and teamwork.	Mary A. Humphries, Beverly Galloway, Ilia Brown, and Vicky Linzy; North Calloway Elementary School, Route 2, Murray, KY 42071. (502) 753-9776.
Trigg County "DIAL" Program	When a student survey at Trigg County High School in rural Kentucky revealed that 90 percent of the student body had difficulty in finding information, teachers implemented DIAL. Project DIAL (Direct Information Assistance Line) is designed to help students develop reference skills using telecommunications. Using DIAL, students learn to access the latest scientific, literary and reference information. Trigg County students can now use state university reference material, government data bases and other sources of information.	August J. Pisa, Coordinator Federal Programs, Trigg County Schools, P.O. Box 31, Cadiz, KY 42211. (502) 522-6075 Ext. 246.

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Accepting Rural Reality

Since the turn of the century, America has embraced a social policy of urbanization. Responding to the demands of industrialization, it adopted an ethic of "bigger is better". Schools were fashioned after the mass-production model to realize the efficiencies being demonstrated on the production lines and prepare the work force for employment in the factories. Improved roads, electrification, a national telephone system, television, air travel, all were a part of an infrastructure that would make America a truly urbanized society. If urban and rural differences could be made to disappear, a homogeneous society would result where common solutions could be applied to common problems.

In spite of this policy of urbanization, rural and urban are still different. A community of 393 operates differently than a city of 3 million or even 300 thousand. Social relationships are more personal and tightly knit. The society is integrated and people tend to be generalists, performing multiple roles. There is little bureaucracy and people deal directly with one another. Communication is verbal rather than written. Who said it is often as important as what's said. Rural people hold different values. In general, they have less formal education, and lower incomes than urban people. Rural people have poorer access to goods and services, including health and welfare, and are more inclined to "make do".

Not only is rural different from urban, but extreme diversity exists within rural itself. Contrary to popular belief, rural and agricultural are not synonymous. Only 29% of non-metro counties have an economic base dependent primarily on agriculture. Manufacturing and transfer payments from retirement each can claim more than 20% of the counties in the U.S. as the primary source of income. These categories are joined by mining, public universities, military bases, state capitols, federal lands, etc. as the basis of the economy. There are also cultural differences. Anglo ethnic groups from Europe dominate the Midwest; Hispanics are a growing majority of the rural Southwest; Blacks are still the dominant population of much of the rural Southeast. Native Americans, with their rich cultural heritage, represent chronic pockets of poverty that have little connection with the rest of rural America.

All this diversity has never fit well with a social policy of urban industrialization. Fortunately, we are moving into a new age, a society dominated by information technologies and the production of services. Whereas industrialization was most suited for large urban areas, the growth sectors of the post-industrial world have no such constraints. In fact, the information age holds the possibility of being more in tune with rural America, accommodating the diversity of a multi-option society, not condemning it. Technology and service production tend to be education intensive, smaller scale, more oriented toward customized production and heavily based on entrepreneurship and innovation. Because of information technologies, these sectors are not limited in their location by access to raw materials or even surface transportation. Therefore, they are free to choose either urban or rural locations.

So what does this mean for rural education? First, rural schools have unique strengths which stem from their size, their close connections with the community, generalist teachers with a concern for individual students, and a safe, healthy learning environment, all factors which research suggests are necessary for an effective school. Second, given the opportunity to redesign the mass-production mode of the "one-best-system", rural schools could be significantly better. Third, the characteristics of the post-industrial society are much more closely aligned with rural reality. The opportunity now exists to design rural schools that both prepare students for the 21st Century and that contribute to rural development. The programs highlighted by this document are a step in that direction.

Paul Nachtigal
Director
Rural Education